# Gen Z

## workplace savings communications guide

Drawing on research and testing, this guide outlines communication principles designed to help employers make workplace retirement and savings programs feel more relevant, credible and actionable for Gen Z employees (born between 1997 and 2012).

Gen Z employees are saving, but they may not always be saving for the long term. Your communications can help by acknowledging uncertainty, reframing saving around control and flexibility, and prompting small actions they can take now.

### How to use this guide

Reference it before you write emails, intranet posts, enrolment reminders, webinar invitations or plan education content about workplace retirement and savings.

Focus on 1 or 2 meaningful changes at a time. Your goal is to shape communications and plan experiences that support action, not just understanding.

Review your message against the communications guide before sending it.

canada life™

# 5 communication principles for reaching Gen Z employees

### 1. Acknowledge uncertainty without amplifying fear

Don’t dismiss the future as predictable or tell them not to worry. Recognize that uncertainty is real, then shift directly to what they can do today.

### 2. Reframe savings as control and flexibility

For Gen Zs, saving doesn’t need to only mean retirement at 65. Position savings as a way to build resilience and stay adaptable across many possible futures.

### 3. Make the first step small and immediate

When the future feels overwhelming, action needs to feel doable. Start by asking them to take one clear step, such as contributing at least enough to benefit from full employer matching (if available). When it comes to learning, encourage them to sign up for a webinar.

### 4. Build trust with plain, specific language

Avoid jargon, pressure and vague promises. Explain what a savings tool can help with, what its limits are and what they can do next.

### 5. Use moments that matter

Enrolment, a first job, a first raise, a bonus or a life change can all be powerful moments to encourage saving. Connect the message to the employee’s current reality rather than just a distant future. For example, an annual plan review can go a long way in helping Gen Zs make the connection between savings and life changes.



canada life™

## Tone guidance

| Aim for | Why it works | Avoid |
|---|---|---|
| **Realistic** | It acknowledges the world Gen Z is navigating. | Overly optimistic reassurance, such as “don’t worry” or “everything will work out.” |
| **Supportive** | It places the focus on help and practical next steps. | Blame, judgment or implying employees are careless with money. |
| **Empowering** | It helps employees see what is within their control. | Fear-based messages, apocalyptic framing or pressure tactics. |
| **Clear** | It lowers effort and makes the next step easier. | Financial jargon, long explanations or unclear calls to action. |
| **Flexible** | It reflects different goals, timelines and abilities to save. | One-size-fits-all messages about a traditional retirement path. |



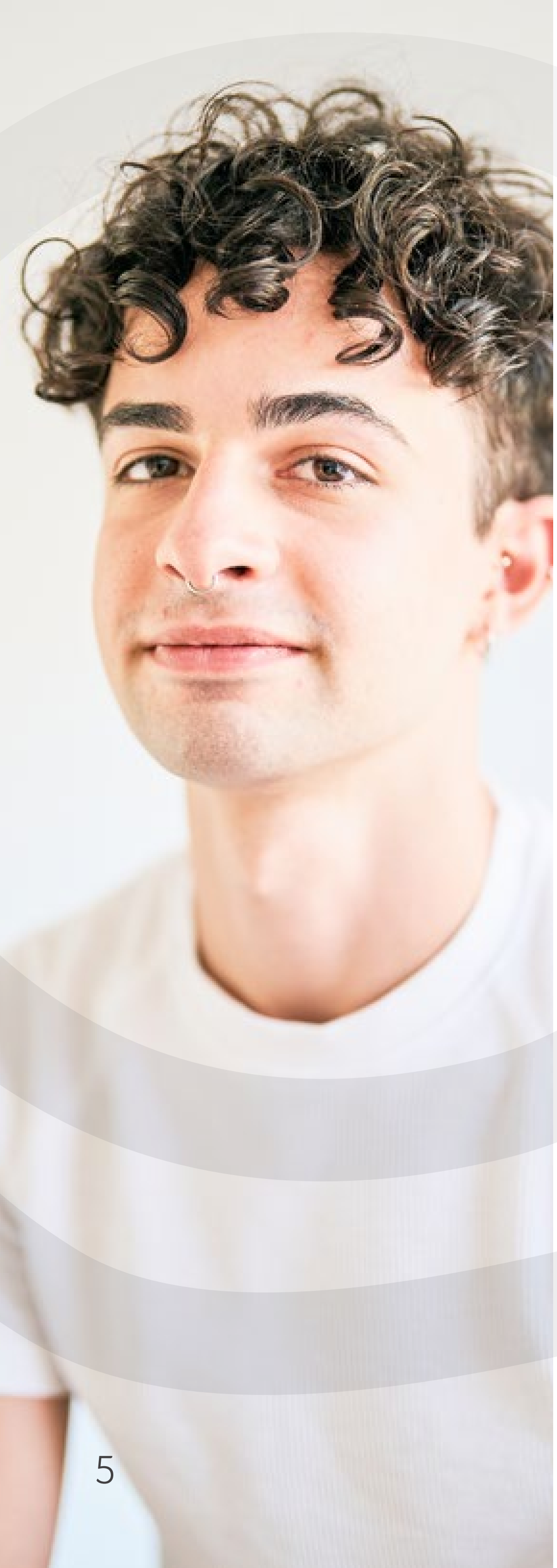
canada life™

# Dos and don’ts

| Do | Don’t |
|---|---|
| Say “The future can feel uncertain. Here’s one step you can take today.” | Say “Stop worrying about the future.” |
| Say “We understand that uncertainty about the future can feel stressful.” | Say “We as an organization feel the stress of an uncertain future.” |
| Frame saving as building options, flexibility and resilience. | Frame savings only in terms of retirement at 65. |
| Offer one clear action per message and include the benefit. | Ask employees to make several decisions at once. |
| Use plain language: “automatic contributions” and “money from each pay.” | Use unexplained terms or technical plan language. |
| Show that even a small contribution can help build a savings habit. | Suggest saving is only worthwhile if employees can contribute a large amount. |
| Recognize that Gen Z may balance short-term needs against long-term goals. | Assume they are impulsive, uninformed or disengaged. |
| Make trustworthy information easy to find. | Expect employees to search through long documents to find what matters. |



canada life™



# Message checklist

## Before you send a communication about workplace retirement and savings to Gen Z employees, check that it follows our guidance:

- ☐ Acknowledge uncertainty in a realistic, authentic way.
- ☐ Avoid fear-based, apocalyptic or manipulative language.
- ☐ Frame saving as control, flexibility or resilience.
- ☐ Connect to an immediate moment or decision the employee may be facing.
- ☐ Give one clear next step.
- ☐ Make the action feel small enough to start now.
- ☐ Explain the benefit in plain language.
- ☐ Avoid judgment about employees' choices or priorities.
- ☐ Use trusted channels and make reliable information easy to find.
- ☐ Support action, not just awareness.

# Before and after messaging examples

Use these examples to understand how you may have communicated in the past and learn a better way to convey that same message. Adapt these examples to your plan and your employee's journey through it.

| Scenario | Don't say | Do say |
|---|---|---|
| **Enrolment reminder** | Start saving for retirement today so you can retire comfortably decades from now. | The future can feel hard to plan for. Starting with even X% (the max) from each pay will give you options for whatever comes next. Review your contributions today. |
| **Automatic contributions** | Set up automatic contributions so you don't fall behind on retirement savings. | Want one less thing to think about? Set up automatic contributions so you can build your savings over time. Start with the max and then adjust if the amount doesn't work for you. |
| **First raise or bonus** | Use your raise to increase your retirement contribution. | Getting a bonus or a raise feels good! Make that feeling last by putting a small part of it toward your workplace savings before adding it to your regular spending. |
| **Long-term saving** | You need to think about retirement now, even if it feels far away. | Saving isn't only about retirement. It gives you a cushion so you don't get buried in debt with an unexpected expense. And it gives you options later – like using it towards a strong financial foundation. |
| **Plan education webinar** | Join our session to learn everything about your group retirement plan. | Join a short session on 3 small steps you can take to make your workplace savings and retirement plan work for you. You can also watch a micro-learning video and learn practical actions you can use right away to work towards your own unique goals. |

**Disclaimer:** This guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute financial, investment, legal, tax or professional advice. The communication principles and examples are intended as general guidance and should be adapted to the needs of each organization and workplace savings program. Results may vary, and no employee engagement, participation or savings outcomes are guaranteed.



79-03539 08/26

canada life™